
Court Appointed Special Advocate Newsletter

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A CHILD'S VOICE IN COURT

Rethinking the Brain

New Insights into Early Development
Families and Work Institute

The article below is a continuation/follow up to "The Important First Years of Life" article by Dana Gilroy, printed in the July Newsletter. Our thanks again to Dana Gilroy for providing this valuable information.

New insights into brain development suggest that as we care for our youngest children, as we institute policies or practices that affect their day-to-day experience, the stakes are very high. But we can take comfort in the knowledge that there are many ways that we as parents, as care givers, as citizens, and as policy makers can raise healthy, happy, smart children. We can take heart in the knowledge that there are many things that we as a nation can do, starting now, to brighten young children's future's and ours.

Research shows that:

1. Human development hinges on the interplay between nature and nurture.

-- How humans develop and learn depends critically and continually on the interplay between nature (an individual's genetic endowment) and nurture (the nutrition, surroundings, care, stimulation, and teaching that are provided or withheld).

-- the impact of environmental factors on the young child's brain development is dramatic and specific; not merely influencing the general direction of development, but actually affecting how the intricate circuitry of the human brain is "wired".

2. Early care has decisive and long-lasting effects on how people develop and learn, how they cope with stress, and how they regulate their own emotions.

-- Babies thrive when they receive warm, responsive early care.

-- Warm and responsive care plays a vital role in healthy development.

-- Individuals' capacities to control their own emotional states appear to hinge on biological systems shaped by their early experiences and attachments.

-- A strong, secure attachment to a nurturing adult can have a protective biological function, helping a growing child withstand the ordinary stresses of daily life.

3. The human brain has a remarkable capacity to change, but timing is crucial.

-- The brain itself can be altered - or helped to compensate for problems - with appropriately timed, intensive intervention. In the first decade of life, the brain's ability to change and compensate is especially remarkable.

-- There are optimal periods of opportunity - "prime times" during which the brain is particularly efficient at specific types of learning.

4. The brain's plasticity also means that there are times when negative experiences or the absence of appropriate stimulation are more likely to have serious and sustained effects.

-- Early exposure to nicotine, alcohol, and drugs may have even more harmful and long-lasting effects on young children than was previously suspected.

--Many of these risk factors are associated with or exacerbated by poverty. For children growing up in poverty, economic deprivation affects their nutrition, access to

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medical care, and safety and predictability of their physical environment, the level of family stress, and the quality and continuity of their day-to-day care.

5. Evidence amassed by neuroscientist and child development experts over the last decade point to the wisdom and efficacy of prevention and early intervention.
- Well designed programs created to promote healthy cognitive, emotional, and social development can improve the prospects - and the quality of life - of many children.
 - The efficacy of early intervention has been demonstrated and replicated in diverse communities across the nation.

Where Do We Go From Here:

1. First do no harm.
 - The principle that guides medical practice should also apply to policies and practices that affect children.
 - Allow parents to fulfill their all-important role in providing and arranging for sensitive, predictable care for their children. Parents need more information about how the kind of care they provide affects their children's capacities.
 - Implement policies that support parents in forming strong, secure attachments with their infants in the early months, and make a concentrated effort to improve the quality of early care and education.
2. Prevention is best, but when a child needs help, intervene quickly and intensively.
 - Warm, responsive care cushions children from the occasional bumps and bruises that are inevitable in everyday life.
 - If children are given timely, intensive help, many can overcome a wide range of developmental problems. To have greatest impact, interventions must be timely and must be followed up with appropriate, sustained services and support.
3. Promote the healthy development and learning of every child of every age, every demographic description, and every risk category.
 - If we miss opportunities to promote healthy development and learning, later remediation may be more difficult and expensive, and may be less effective.

Implications for Policy and Practice:

- Improve health and protection by providing health care coverage for new and expectant parents.
- Promote responsible parenthood by expanding proven approaches.
 - all parents can benefit from solid information and support as they raise their children; some need more intensive assistance.
 - certain parent education/family support programs promote the healthy development of children, improve the well being of parents, and are cost effective.
- Safeguard children in early care and education

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- from harm and promote their learning and development.
- The nation's youngest children are most likely to be in unsafe, substandard child care.
 - More than one-third are in situations that can be detrimental to their development, while most of the rest are in settings where minimal learning is taking place.
- Enable communities to have the flexibility and the resources they need to mobilize on behalf of young children and their families.

OLD THINKING...

- How a brain develops depends on the genes you were born with.
- The experiences you have before age three have a limited impact on later development.
- A secure relationship with a primary care giver creates a favorable context for early development and learning.
- Brain development is linear: the brain's capacity to learn and change grows steadily as an infant progresses toward adulthood.
- A toddler's brain is much less active than the brain of a college student.

NEW THINKING...

- How a brain develops hinges on a complex interplay between the genes you're born with and the experiences you have.
- Early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain, and on the nature and extent of adult capacities.
- Early interactions don't just create a context, they directly affect the way the brain is "wired".
- Brain development is non-linear. There are prime times for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills.
- By the time children reach age three, their brains are twice as active as those of adults. Activity levels drop during adolescence.

Research taken from: Rethinking the Brain-New Insights into Early Development; Conference Report-Brain Development in Young Children: New Frontiers for Research, Policy and Practice, Organized by the Families and Work Instituted, June 1996

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!			
Nick Nichols	2	Kerry Fitzmaurice	19
Jean Davis	10	Beverly Burch	20
Sharon Dunn	12	Mary Schmidt	21
Meryl Ahart	14	Nancy Molever	21
Robin Cain	14	Nancy Nelson	26
Lori Sipple	14	Jami Johnston	28
Rebecca English	17	Frances Dishmon	31

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CASA SPONSORED TRAINING

August 4, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Central Library Peer Group Meeting - All CASAs are encouraged to attend. Peer Groups allow CASAs the opportunity to share resources, ask questions, and meet other volunteers. Location - Central Library, 1221 North Central (at McDowell), training room B. RSVP to the CASA Office by 7-31-98.

August 7, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., CPS Sequel - Detecting Abuse - An overview of the Investigations and Intake process of CPS, the physical evidence of abuse, collection of data, and the social dynamics of abuse. Presenters Beverlee Kroll & Christa Cavan. Location Juvenile Court Durango, 3125 W. Durango, Room 223. Please RSVP the CASA Office by 7-30-98.

August 21, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Florence Prison Tour - Participants will be given a tour of the facility along with an explanation of their policies and procedures. This tour will provide insight into the Department of Corrections and an area which some of our CASA kids' parents face. Participants must be willing to give the Department of Corrections their DOB and SS# for final clearance. Please RSVP to the CASA Office by 8-3-98 and receive special instructions and directions.

September 3, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m., Court Report Writing Training - All CASAs need to sign up for one of the five Court Report Writing workshops. Presenters: Maricopa CASA Program Staff. Location: Juvenile Court Durango, 3125 W. Durango, Room 223. Please RSVP the CASA Office by 9-1-98.

RESOURCES

Brain Development Resources

Web Sites:

www.jamyourchild.org
www.kidnetflorida.org
www.dana.org/brainweb/
www.carnegie.org/startingpoints
www.latimes.com/HOME/NEWS/SCIENCE/REPORTS/
www.pacsci.org/public/education/sow.bp/

Other Sources:

1. Carnegie Corporation of New York (1994, April) Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children.
2. Families and Work Institute (1997) Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development, Conference Proceedings by Rima Shore, New York, 212-465-2044 or www.familiesandwork.org.

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3. Newsweek Special Edition, Spring/Summer 1997, Your Child: From Birth to Three.
4. Ounce of Prevention Fund (1996) Starting Smart: How Early Experiences Affect Brain Development. Chicago, Illinois. 312-922-3863
5. Time Special Report. Feb 3, 1997. How a Child's Brain Develops: and what it means for child care and welfare reform.

Books:

1. Goleman, D. (1996) Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. New York: Bantam Books.
2. Healey, J. (1987) Your Child's Growing Mind: A practical guide to brain development and learning from birth to adolescence. New York: Doubleday.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

LET'S GET TOGETHER!

Come join other volunteers and staff for a few hours of fun and good conversation on Thursday, **September 10, from 4-6 p.m.**, at Sam's Cafe at the Arizona Center, 455 N. Third Street. No training hours required! Let us know you'll be there by calling 506-4083 by September 4, 1998.

FALL PICNIC IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Make plans now to attend the annual **CASA Fall Picnic** at Margaret T. Hance Park on **Sunday, October 25 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Bring your CASA children for an afternoon of fun and laughs as we play volleyball, run the three-legged-race, and eat hot dogs under cool October skies.

HELP WANTED...

We are Looking for volunteers willing to help promote the CASA program in your neighborhood. CASAs will be tasked with identifying 10-15 locations within your neighborhood that would lead to strong candidates for the CASA program. This assignment will also require reaching out to local organizations for presentations about the CASA program. West Valley efforts are particularly needed. Posters and other materials are available to enhance your efforts. If interested, contact CASA Coordinator Nancy Molever (506-4083).

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 <i>Central Library Peer Group Meeting - 11 a.m -1 p.m</i> 1221 N. Central; training room B	5	6	7 <i>CPS Sequel-Detecting Abuse - 10 a.m - 12 noon</i> 3125 W. Durango; Room 223	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 <i>Florence Prison Tour - 8:30 a.m - 1:00 p.m.</i> Call to reserve your spot & receive special instructions	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CASA FALL PICNIC - Sunday, October 25 from 12:00 noon - 4:00 p.m.
Margaret T. Hance Park; 67 W. Culver. RSVP to the CASA Office 506-4083.

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COMMENDATIONS

CASA volunteer **Eileen Wells** was commended by FCRB for her continued involvement in the lives of her CASA children. Keep up the good work Eileen!

CASA **Lynda Pederson** was commended by both the FCRB and the case manager on her case for her on-going commitment to the children. Way to go Lynda!

At a recent training session, case manager Melissa Smith raved about what a good CASA **Roy Reynolds** is. Melissa and the CASA staff wants to thank Roy for all his hard work and Melissa wants to say thank you Roy!

A thank you is extended to **Dana Gilroy** from Judge Portley for her article published in last months newsletter. Judge Portley felt "it was a wonderful discussion about the first year of a youngster's life." Great job Dana!

Maggie Clancy was commended by the Juvenile Probation Officer of her CASA child following a court hearing. Maggie is said to have been "very interested in the case and was very appropriate in her concerns before and after court." Thank you Maggie. Your sincerity shows and your efforts are appreciated!

Note of thanks to **Carol Salvatore** and **Adam Mendoza** for their interviews resulting in the Capitol Times article published 7-17-98 written by free-lance writer Laura Laughlin. Our volunteers are our best recruiters!

SOME ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Document Author: Compiled from "Ideas for Simple and Not So Simple Advocacy Strategies"

Reprinted from: September 1995 issue of the Child Care Law Center's Working for Change journal)

1. ATTEND A MEETING of a group that is already working on the issues that concern you. Whether you are interested as an individual or as an organization, there are probably a number of groups that are working on issues related to yours with whom you can share ideas and strategies.

2. ESTABLISH OR JOIN A COALITION of interested individuals and organizations. It is likely that you have common interests or goals. Try contacting local Junior Leagues, Grandparent's and Senior Citizens' groups, Leagues of Women Voters, and legal services programs.

3. REQUEST THAT LEGISLATORS or their staff meet with you and your organization to discuss some of your concerns about their policies, or to reinforce your support for their position. Offer examples of how important programs help young children and families and why they are worth saving. Follow up the meeting with a note

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thanking the member for supporting, or at least listening to, your position.

4. WRITE A LETTER to your local or state legislator. It has been said that 15 letters will get the attention of a state legislator. The key is to get letters from parents, child care providers, and even children, describing how legislative changes and/or funding cutbacks will affect them. It's important to communicate while legislation is being drafted, when it is considered in committee, and during the debate and voting process on the floor.

5. PERSONALIZE YOUR ISSUE. Often funding cuts will mean the loss of jobs for important people. Parents and providers should write letters about the significance of a particular person in their lives, and how the loss of that person's services will affect them. Legislators should be able to picture the impact of a particular program on a family or community that will be affected.

6. INVITE LEGISLATORS TO VISIT your programs or families. Spending time with constituents will help to educate legislators about what you do, and how important certain programs are for families and child care services. It will also give them an opportunity to attract media attention and publicly express their support for children and families.

7. ORGANIZE AN EVENT to tell your story to a wider audience. Organizing an event, such as a doll campaign, or a walk in a child care provider's or working mother's footsteps can also attract the media. Or conduct a survey of parents on a waiting list for subsidized child care and stage a press conference to release the results.

8. WRITE AN OP-ED PIECE OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR for your local newspaper. Get parents, business leaders, funders, and other community supporters to do the same.

(Compiled from "Ideas for Simple and Not So Simple Advocacy Strategies," an article in the September 1995 issue of the Child Care Law Center's Working for Change journal)

**"Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give."
1979 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child**

MAKE A DIFFERENCE For Foster and Adoptive Children

- Remember foster care is about children FIRST
 - Never underestimate your ability to make a difference
 - Make every effort to be readily accessible to everyone and engage in open and trusting relationships
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- Share information needs and expectations honestly and clearly with each team member
- Advocate for speedy court resolutions and permanency plans
- Be respectful to team members, biological parents, and children
- Develop partnerships with all professionals
- Network with team members through support and advocacy
- Work towards a common goal for the CHILD
- Remember that, FOR A CHILD, time is of the essence
- Value and respect each member's ability, time, and commitment
- Seek out and be receptive to the ideas, suggestions, and opinions of others
- Begin a Life Book on the child's first day in foster care
- Be open and honest with children regardless of their age
- Practice daily the ten elements of trust.

Why do we **NEVER** have time to do **IT RIGHT** the **FIRST** time but we **ALWAYS** have time to it **OVER**? **CASA VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY FOR KIDS!**

TRUST

Children trust those who:

1. They decide to trust right away or decide right away that they will eventually be able to trust.
2. Are simple, go slow, and break down what they are talking about into simple steps.
3. Have mastered the skill of "preview" - telling what's going to happen before it does.
4. Give them some control over what happens, gives them choices, gives them respect.
5. Make mistakes themselves and permit children to make mistakes, but still care about them regardless.
6. Care about what they care about.
7. Don't lie to them, who don't surprise them in ways that would humiliate or embarrass them.
8. Trust them; those who ask what **THEY** think.
9. Do things they don't have to, and are sensitive to the needs of others.
10. Listen to them.

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Childhood should be a time of no-risk dependency.

Every child needs a relationship with at least one other person who is nurturing and consistently available in order to reach adulthood without extraordinary difficulties.

Reprint from: 1994 National CASA Association Conference.

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